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# Teachers in politics could strengthen government — academician

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Teachers in politics may not sound right for most people who believe they should do more to improve the education level in the country but an academician believes otherwise.

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris's (UPSI) Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni) Associate Prof Datuk Dr Junaidy Abu Bakar said apart from the core role as teachers, being the role models for the society they could help enhance public confidence in the government.

"Education is the main medium in getting to the people's hearts. With a big number of teachers in the country, about 420,000 of them, I believe in the significant role and powers of the teachers in assisting the government in winning the people's trust.

"Apart from that, through the Parents and Teachers' Association (PTA) and District Education Offices (PPD), teachers can easily entrench themselves at the different levels of the society through numerous programmes throughout the year," he said to Bernama.

Dr Junaidy was elaborating on the recent statement made by the Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor who admitted that the government's decision to bar teachers from participating active politics about a decade ago has proven to be counter productive for Barisan Nasional (BN).

Tengku Adnan's statement drew flak from the opposition

that claimed the move is to make use of the teachers to serve the interest of Umno and BN but Dr Junaidy begged to differ saying teachers were matured people and thus they would make responsible decisions.

"The teachers are public servants who are answerable to the government. On the capacity of being public servants, they have to carry out their responsibilities in advocating the policies of the ruling government," he said.

He also elaborated on the role of the teachers in advocating the fundamental philosophy or the Education Development Plan that serves as the underlying policy in developing the nation.

Teachers have to show their loyalty to the government and this will serve as an example for the students. They also have to use the right channels to present their grouses.

"The government always listens to the grouses of the teachers. And the testimony to this is the grouses on School Bases Assessment (PBS) and the improvements in the teaching service schemes, where the government responded favourably to both," he said.

The Dean of the Law, Government and International Studies College at Universiti Utara Malaysia Associate Professor Dr Ahmad Martadha Mohamed opined that allowing teachers to participate in active politics is a progressive move in winning back the people's support.

"Many of the elected representatives from Umno were previously teachers. If teachers can explain government policies

well, then definitely the society will listen to them and this will work in favour of the government.

"Thus the teachers must know of the government policies so that it is easy for them to explain to the people. This is the strategy that the government has to adopt," he said.

Having said that, Dr Ahmad Martadha cautioned that the government has to give them a clear picture of its policies to avoid the pitfall of them falling for unverified information that could work against the government.

If the teaching community are confident on the government's explanation on its policies and stand, they may well provide whole hearted support for the government and this in turn will work favourably for BN.

He said teachers should be allowed to participate in active politics as they could contribute favourably to the government. And they should also be allowed to hold important positions in the party to ensure they could play an effective role.

"This is important in revitalising the nation's democratic process. Though there are teachers and government officers who support the opposition, this is probably because as they don't have a clear picture of the situation.

"Freedom to engage in politics is important in a democratic system. Teachers in politics should make a wise choice especially in deciding with whom they are going to show their allegiance and should avoid being manipulated by those with vested interest," he said. - Bernama